

NTT INDYCAR SERIES

News Conference

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Colton Herta

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joined now by the two-time champion of the Firestone Grand Prix of Monterey, win number four for the family, led 91 of 95 laps, second win of the season, fifth of his career, Colton Herta.

You made it look easy. I'm sure it wasn't.

COLTON HERTA: No, it wasn't. Alex, really the whole race, was right there. Then Grosjean at the end pressured Alex, therefore pressured me. It was very interesting to see the cars that struggled with tire deg that we were much faster than. Once we got to them, were stuck behind them, struggling to overtake.

The balance for most of the race, when I was stuck behind lap traffic, defending from Alex but trying to get by the other drivers, was very difficult and different to the race I had in 2019.

They were both refreshing and fun. Glad it was over because it got hectic at some points. I really didn't want it to be.

THE MODERATOR: I'm assuming your dad, someone told you that 51 was charging through the field...

COLTON HERTA: Not initially. He told me after the checkered flag that Grosjean finished third. I was very confused on how that happened, especially at this place, right? I think he's in a perfect position to use that strategy of using his two sets of new reds. He used it very nicely.

The tire situation was so interesting, but the used reds were dropping off and falling off by lap 11, whereas the new reds you can run till lap 20 and still be pushing after that.

I don't think I've ever seen a deficit that much between two-lap-old reds versus brand-new reds, a 10-lap difference in deg, which is pretty crazy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You hit something on the track. What was it?

COLTON HERTA: It was either a squirrel or a bunny. I don't know. Last time I was here there were a lot of squirrels on the track, so I imagine it was one of those guys unfortunately. But he came along with me to win the race, so... He's won an INDYCAR race. He's got a lot more than a lot of INDYCAR drivers (smiling).

Q. I guess he crossed the line ahead of you.

COLTON HERTA: He really won the race.

Q. Blue flags, a constant debate about what should happen there. You did a great job of keeping Alex behind you. Do you think there needs to be a change in that rule?

COLTON HERTA: Yes and no. In the car, if you were to ask me, I would have said, yeah, like 100% we need (indiscernible) blue flag.

But I think from, like, the consumer aspect, it makes the race more interesting, especially when you come to a place like this that's so hard to overtake. You're either waiting for your tires to drastically fall off, which that never happens for the top-running guys, or something like that.

It made the race interesting at the front. Before that I had a six- or seven-plus-second lead over Alex for a lot, first half of the race. That really clamped it down and brought him right to me.

It was interesting. It was something new for me. I'd never really had that in INDYCAR where I was lapping people and struggling to lap people, having a car that I'm having to defend from and also attack in front of me.

It was interesting. It made the race fun. It definitely made it more stressful, but it made the race more fun. Especially in Detroit when that happened, I wasn't in the position to win. I think I was, like, third at that time. It was even more fun.

When you're leading, it's not as fun. Any other place it gives you an opportunity to win, which that's what INDYCAR racing is about, right? You can win from

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anywhere. Like we saw Grosjean started 13th and finished third. I think it's a part of INDYCAR racing that's always kind of been there.

Q. Yesterday you talked about all the changes that have to be done overnight. I assume they were spot on? Can I assume the morning warmup being so weird, useless for you to figure out?

COLTON HERTA: Yeah, we didn't take anything from warmup just because there was a lot of mildew, it was almost wet. Yeah, it wasn't very useful.

We had a good idea of what we wanted to do based off of 2019, then based off of what we see the aeroscreen do during races, too. Kind of a hybrid setup we came up with between the two.

It worked good. I don't think it was excellent. There's always stuff we can work on. But I do think we had the best car today.

THE MODERATOR: What happened on the second lap between you and your teammate?

COLTON HERTA: I dropped a wheel in turn four, and he got a run on me. I partially defended. He chose to go to the inside, from my point of view. I haven't seen a replay or anything. From my point of view, I gave him enough room. I think he walked up the track, got loose on the curb inside. Then I felt contact in my left rear, then I saw him spinning to the inside. That's what I would imagine happened. I haven't seen anything, so I can't really say if I'm right or wrong.

Q. Did you make a mistake at all this weekend?

COLTON HERTA: No, I did have some. I did have a moment that almost cost me the lead with Alex when I dropped a wheel in turn four and he got a run on me. I did that again later in the race where I dropped the wheel. It wasn't a perfect weekend by any means. But it was pretty darn close to it.

Q. Was your strategy the same as 2019?

COLTON HERTA: Somewhat. I think we were able to be a little bit more aggressive because after the first stint we had a good gap to third. It's really just me racing Alex at that point in second. So we were really only focused on him, whereas in 2019 we were focused on Dixon, Pagnaud and Power. They were all right behind me. We had to be a little bit more careful in that situation. Today we were able to be a little bit more aggressive and just kind of react to what Alex did.

THE MODERATOR: Tacos tonight?

COLTON HERTA: Oh, yeah, yes.

THE MODERATOR: Who is buying?

COLTON HERTA: The place I go to sells them for a dollar. It's pretty easy.

Q. What was the game plan going into this race? How do you think you executed it?

COLTON HERTA: The plan was simply to win, and do that by any means necessary. Seems like we did that. The strategy was great. The pit stops were great. There was never a point in the race where I really felt like threatened pace-wise and stuff.

I think we had an amazing car, an amazing crew, and everybody put it together perfectly.

Q. Can you go into depth about this track and the difficulties of it?

COLTON HERTA: I guess the hardest thing to tackle is just the tire wear. Rear tires tend to go off here. A lot of people struggle with that. A lot of people struggled with that during the race that I could see that I caught up to and stuff. That's probably the biggest thing, is having no rear tires and a very fast track with a lot of cambered corners.

It gives you a false sense of security when you get into the banking, the camber of the corner, that makes the rear slide out even more and kill your tires even more.

Q. How have you enjoyed your visit in Monterey County so far?

COLTON HERTA: I love it. I always love coming up here. I didn't get time to go to aquarium. I love that here. Unfortunately I didn't get time to do that, but maybe next time.

Q. Last year we didn't have the race, but this is your second win back to back. How does that feel?

COLTON HERTA: It feels great. I think there was a lot of unknowns coming into this weekend or how the pace was going to be and stuff. Right after the first session, we asserted that the pace from 2019 was still there. We needed to fix some things for the car, but the main pace was there.

I think once we kind of got on top of that, my engineer



Nathan made some amazing changes during the weekend, it took a lot of the stress off of me and I was able to do my job a little bit better.

Q. What is the difference in race strategy from this win?

COLTON HERTA: The biggest difference would be the compound. It tended to wear a lot if you had used tires. But the new tires tended to stay in there, which was surprising because I didn't expect that at all. New reds were better than blacks on track. This is the last place I would think that would happen.

The pace dropoff was significant for both, but the reds just stayed that little bit better the whole time and were able to hang on for a good 20 laps before you kind of hit that cliff. But the pace advantage on the reds was massive.

Maybe next year there's a thing to qualifying 13th here, right? The guys might not be too upset when they get knocked out in round one.

Q. How about the difference between having Brian Barnhart and your old man on the timing stand?

COLTON HERTA: It's different. I think it means more to have my dad on the timing stand for a race like this. But both are great strategists. Both got me many wins. I love working with both.

I guess to win at Laguna Seca, it's awesome to have another Herta there.

Q. You led 94% of race laps here. A ridiculous number.

COLTON HERTA: I think that just shows how dominant the cars were today, right? We had great cars. I think it's easy to say that we had the best car. We could push when we wanted, we could conserve when we wanted. Our pace didn't seem to be too affected. Never felt at any point vulnerable to Alex and stuff like that during the race.

Really easy to be calm and cool because of how good the car was.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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